DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 120 432 CE 006 675

AUTHOR Ohliger, John; Fewster, Lowell
TITLE The Wisconsin Idea: Some Reflections on Historical Context and Issues.
INSTITUTION Wisconsin Univ., Madison. Center for Community Leadership Development.
PUB DATE 24 Nov 75
NOTE 15p.

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage
DESCRIPTORS Agricultural Education; *Educational History; Institutional Role; *Land Grant Universities; *Political Influences; Role Perception; *Rural Extension; *Vocational Education

ABSTRACT

The authors examine the historical context and current implications of four questions: (1) What is the relationship of land grant universities to agrarian discontent? (2) What was the Wisconsin Idea? (3) What is "public service"? and (4) What views of knowledge predominated in the early days? The land grant university was central as a cause/effect in two shifts which changed the dynamics of agrarian discontent of the post-Civil War to the 20th century period--the shift from political action to attention to specialized crop development and the shift from an "agrarian" world view to an "agricultural" one. Although there is disagreement on the Wisconsin Idea, a number of sources characterize it as a political rather than a service program. Questions are raised concerning the current connection between university extension and political leaders. Concerns are expressed regarding commitment of land grant institutions to service, who and what constitutes "public" and "service", and the public relations dimension. Today people are beginning to question past and prevailing views of knowledge as virtue, and knowledge as scientific-technical expertise flowing from the university to the people. (EA)

****
* Documents acquired by ERIC include many informal unpublished *
* materials not available from other sources. ERIC makes every effort *
* to obtain the best copy available. Nevertheless, items of marginal *
* reproducibility are often encountered and this affects the quality *
* of the microfiche and hardcopy reproductions ERIC makes available *
* via the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS). EDRS is not *
* responsible for the quality of the original document. Reproductions *
* supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made from the original. *
****

SOCIAL POLICY ACTION/RESEARCH CENTER

Phone: 257-1039
731 State Street
Madison, WI. 53703

...a combined program of

MADISON CAMPUS MINISTRY and
CENTER FOR COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP
DEVELOPMENT: UW EXTENSION

ED120432

The Wisconsin Idea:

Some Reflections on Historical Context & Issues

Prepared for Staff Discussion

Center for Community Leadership Development

November 24, 1975

John Ohliger

Lowell Fewster

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH,
EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY.

CE008675

I. Introduction

Before beginning we would like to emphasize that what follows represents only the very rudimentary results of some lines of study we are just starting to pursue. We haven't had time yet to do more than just scratch the surface, but we hope what we have uncovered will be helpful in stimulating worthwhile discussion. It should be clear than any conclusions we present we hold very tentatively.

Anyone turning to a historical study of General and Cooperative Extension for help with present concerns is faced with at least two difficult problems:

On the one hand, it is very hard to penetrate the often self-congratulatory and simplisticly moralizing rhetoric of most histories written by educators to find the relationship between the origin and growth of these institutional programs and the political, economic, and other social forces of the particular period. Educational historians appear to either treat the origin and development of these programs in some kind of an antiseptic vacuum, or if they do refer to other forces, have great difficulty bringing themselves to go beyond the view that the people associated with these programs were acting out of some kind of disinterested moral drive that somehow rose above the grubby selfish concerns of the politically and economically involved.

On the other hand, examining histories focusing on these other forces it is hard to find specific links to these programs. Tangential references to such programs suggest that they were essentially minor examples of dependent institutional responses to the thrusts of the day.

We hope you will keep these two problems in mind as we attempt to point to linkages between educational and other forces in seeking help for the present through the exploration of four questions:

1. What is the relationship of Land Grant Universities to agrarian discontent?

2. What was the Wisconsin Idea?

3. What is "public service?"

4. What views of knowledge predominated in the early days?

II. Agrarian Discontent and Land Grant Universities

Agrarian discontent and agitation for reform and radical change is an essential force in the history of the United States from the post-Civil War period into the twentieth century. This period is often labeled "the Gilded Era" by historians because of the growth of business and transportation trusts and the acquisition of wealth by monopoly power and manipulation by "robber barons". Farmer discontent was related directly to the trusts. Additional forces included the closing of the frontier and the end of free or low cost land. Faced with farmed-out land, the farm family could no longer move further west. With the growth of Canadian and Great Plains wheat, Wisconsin's single crop wheat farmers were in trouble. They tried growing tobacco, hops and even mint, before dairy technology, encouraged by the Land Grant university, and adequate urban markets provided the answer to the wheat problem. But the forces were more than the soil and the closing of the frontier. The discontented wheat farmer directly felt the oppressive control of grain elevators, railroads, banks, and the distant grain exchange.(1) This discontent led to political organization by the Grangers who captured control of legislatures in Illinois, Wisconsin, Iowa and Minnesota and established the right of states to regulate railroad rates.(2) In North Dakota the Non-Partisan League developed state-owned grain elevators and formed a state bank which is still a model for reformers such as Colorado State Treasurer Sam Brown.(3)

In broad stroke generalization, there were two shifts which changed the dynamics of the discontent; the Land Grant university was related to both. The first was the shift from political action to attention to specialized crop development(4), and the second was the shift from an "agrarian" world view to an "agricultural" one. Both shifts had to do with the development of technology and the application of practically applied science. And the Land Grant University is central as a cause or an effect, or both. There are arguments that Land Grant schools of agriculture and co-op extension functioned to defuse the agrarian discontent(5). Paul A. Miller, president of Rochester Institute of Technology, observes:

> "the Extension idea was able to quell the social and political divisiveness engendered in the farmers' movements of the last half of the nineteenth century and to introduce a new set of rural symbols based on education, technology, and political organization."(6)

It is argued that Extension gave farmers a false hope that new techniques and technologies would preserve the family farm and thus furthered the transformation from a rural to urban society without violence.(7)

Serious attention has been given by both the supporters and detractors of Extension to the role of the "rural way of life" in the formation of the outreach aspects of the agricultural college and extension services. Although there is much rhetoric about the "rural way of life," it would appear that the Land Grant University was more geared to the application of science for economic enhancement.

The rural way of life in the 19th century and earlier was attached to the agrarian ideal which in contemporary terms would be best called a "lifestyle."

It assumed the superiority of an agrarian life and included admiration for the yeoman farmer for "his honest industry, his independence, his frank spirit of equality, his ability to produce and enjoy a simple abundance"....rather than "his capacity to exploit opportunities and make money."(8) Jim Hightower's somewhat romantic appeal to the family farm has some elements of this myth although more recently he has talked more of the "efficiency of the family farm as a productive unit."(9)

Agrarian concerns were expressed politically by the Granger movement in Wisconsin. But the Land Grant institutions appear to have had little interaction with the agrarian themes. Rather the practical application of scientific knowledge(10) is more atuned to agricultural productivity and problems. Land Grant focus was on the economic and vocational issues of agriculture rather than the agrarian lifestyle. In Wisconsin "the Wisconsin Idea of Dairying", in response to the single crop wheat crisis, was the sharing of technological and practical knowhow on dairy farming.(11) Although we have discovered little evidence that extension was a direct or conscious attempt to defuse the agrarian radicalism of those times, there is little love lost between agrarian dissidents and agricultural colleges. The Non-Partisan League in North Dakota sought to alter the agricultural college board to one "that was more friendly to the farmer" and the Farmer's Union generally "displayed a belligerent attitude toward the existing agricultural colleges."(12)

Further evidence of economic responses to rural life problems is in the Country Life Commission, appointed by President Theodore Roosevelt in 1908 which addressed itself to improving the quality of rural life. Four of its six major problem areas deal, however, with application of scientific agricultural knowledge, business systems and adequate transportation for marketing.(13)

Business interests, especially local banks and railroads, saw the advantages for themselves of the applied scientific agriculture and its dissemination through extension. Before Smith-Lever, railroads sponsored extension trains which toured the countryside with displays and speakers on agricultural topics.(14) Also, Seaman Knapp, to get farmers to try his methods, enlisted the support of the local business community who could use the leverage of their credit and "in this fashion a great many technologically reactionary husbandmen were dragooned into progressive agriculture."(15) Railroad and business lobbys were key in the passage of the Smith-Lever Act in 1914 creating the Extension Service.(16)

The business ethos then pervaded the agricultural scene. Statements such as "What the farmer wants to produce is not crops, but money," and the description of a 1904 Farmer's Institute as "a business meeting for businessman", are in direct conflict with the classic agrarian ideal.(17)

A significant value shift in the move from the agrarian values to commercial or business agriculture was the change from the universality of the agrarian concern with the situation of all farm people to attention to identification with successful use of specialized skills and technology. The universality of concern for all farm people is gone and there is little sympathy and indeed some antipathy by "successful" farmers towards "the interests of farmers who were dispossessed or bypassed or displaced by the process of prosperity."(18) Secretary of Agriculture Earl Butz's "adapt or perish" statements about marginal farmers provide a direct contemporary link.

Implications or possible conclusions for further discussion from this historical sketch include:

1. The roots of agrarian discontent and organized action are deep but largely buried by the emphasis on scientific, commercialized agriculture. The Land Grant University has been a major factor in this process.

2. Response to concerns with the quality of rural life have been centered almost completely on economic concerns from the earliest extension projects.

3. The class division between farmers (traditional, or marginal vs. business, progressive, scientific) has long history. It contributes to resistance among successful and business oriented community farm leaders to programs directed at marginal farmers and poor people.

4. Extension's lack of concern with the preservation of the family farm stems from its inception as an organization oriented towards the economic and not the agrarian way of life.

Footnotes: Agrarian Discontent and Land Grant Universities

1. Lipset, Seymour Martin, Agrarian Socialism, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1971, p.29.

2. Saloutos, Theodore and Hicks, John D., Agricultural Discontent in the Middle West: 1900-1939, Madison, University of Wisconsin, 1951, p.6.

3. Lipset, p.29.

4. Lampard, Eric E., The Rise of the Dairy Industry in Wisconsin: A Study In Agricultural Change 1820-1920, Madison, State Historical Society, 1963, p.339

5. Carlson, Robert A., "Cooperative Extension: A Historical Assessment," Journal of Extension, Fall 1970, p.14

6. Miller, Paul A., The Cooperative Extension Service: Paradoxical Servant: The Rural Precedent in Continuing Education, Syracuse University, 1973 p.9 Paul Miller has also worked as a leader in extension at Michigan State University and as Assistant Secretary for Education, U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare.

7. Carlson, Robert A., Journal of Extension, p.14. Critics point out that this is making a case on the basis of what did not happen rather than what did. Cosgriffe, Harry A., "Critique: History or Speculation", Journal of Extension, Fall 1970, p.22.

8. Hofstader, Richard, The Age of Reform: From Bryan to F.D.R., New York, Vintage, 1960, p.23,24.

9. Hightower, Jim, Speech at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, February 13, 1974.

10. Lampard, Eric, pp.333,338, Report of the Joint USDA-NASULGC Study Committee on Cooperative Extension, A People and A Spirit, p.17.

11. Lampard, Eric, p.340. Lampard traces the use of the phrase "Wisconsin Idea" back to 1898 in reference to the use of specialized dairy breeds. p.425 note 18.

12. Saloutos and Hicks, pp.175, 229.

13. Report of the Commission on Country Life, New York, Sturgis and Walton, 1911, pp.19-20.

14. Scott, Roy V., The Reluctant Farmer: The Rise of Agricultural Extension to 1914, Urbana, University of Illinois, p.176.

15. Hofstader, P.125.

16. Saloutos & Hicks, 263, Hofstader, p.125.

17. Hofstader, p.126

18. Hofstader, p.123

II. The Wisconsin Idea

In the most recent book on the University of Wisconsin the Wisconsin Idea is called simply "a period of service to the state,"(1) President Weaver in his 1972 Statement to the Board of Regents, "The Revitalizing of the Wisconsin Idea," calls it "the public service commitment we have long held."(2) Yet in two standard encyclopedias of American history the Wisconsin Idea is characterized as the political program of Governor Robert M. La Follette with no reference to University Extension or even to the University.(3)

Vernon Carstensen, one of the authors of the two volume University of Wisconsin Press history of the University, states that "It would probably be impossible to get complete agreement on a detailed statement of what the Wisconsin Idea embraced,"(4) Carstensen cites a number of articles of the day pointing to the possibility that it was more a matter of University "influence" than "service," including one titled "A University that Runs a State."(5)

Was the Wisconsin Idea essentially shorthand for the political program of Governor La Follette and those clustered around him in the Wisconsin "Progressive" movement? And how did University Extension fit in with this movement? There are a few tantalizing hints in the Curti and Carstensen history of the University and elsewhere including one that "the extension division became the darling of the reformers."(6) The President of the University, Charles R. Van Hise, given credit with others for reviving Extension under the label of the Wisconsin Idea, was apparently also directly involved in non-university political questions.(7)

If indeed the connection between University Extension and the "progressive" political activities of the La Follette group was direct and strong than it might be helpful to examine some of the characteristics of this group. For example, Richard Hofstadter, the author of The Age of Reform, says two members of the "La Follette brain trust at the University of Wisconsin...gave learned support" to the "anti-immigrant sentiment" of the day. He concludes: "Progressive reform drew its greatest support from the more discontented of the native Americans" (not Native Americans).(8) And Hofstadter notes that though La Follette and his group opposed "political machines" and favored more direct "democracy," La Follette "was an extremely astute machine-master, who knew the techniques of the bosses and used some of them to build a militant and well-disciplined state organization."(9)

Questions for the present drawn from this brief dip into the background of the Wisconsin Idea include: What is the current connection between University Extension and the political leaders of the state government? If it is still direct what purpose is served by masking this connection? To what extent is University Extension a device for carrying out the political purposes of state government leaders which could not be accomplished, or accomplished as well, if the connection between the two were publicly known?

Footnotes: The Wisconsin Idea

1. Wedemeyer, Charles A., "University Extension - A Lively Mechanism for the Wisconsin Idea," in A Resourceful University: The University of Wisconsin-Madison in Its 125th Year. Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1975. Wedemeyer is The William H. Lighty Professor of Education, The University of

Wisconsin-Extension. This chapter is being distributed free of charge at the information window of the Extension Building, 432 North Lake Street. The complete sentence from which this quotation is taken is: "Just when the future of University Extension seemed much in doubt these three men - Van Hise, McCarthy, and La Follette - came together in their different roles to lead the state and the University into a period of service to the state which came to be called the Wisconsin Idea." (p.73) There are two other references to the Wisconsin Idea in this chapter: "The proposal (by Van Hise to the faculty for the organization of a University Extension Division) was accepted with amendments, and in 1907 the most tangible results of the dreams of 1849 had come into existence: a mechanism by which the Wisconsin Idea of service to the people of the state could be carried out." (p.73) Wedemeyer writes of the university presidency of Thomas C. Chamberlin and his acquaintance with the "British social invention called 'university extension'". He then quotes from the 1888 Catalogue of the University, assuming it is written by Chamberlin: "Some features of the English System are impratical (sic) for us at present, but the University of Wisconsin has independently become a pioneer in an analogous movement, that may, in its full organization and development, be not less conducive to the common end sought. This embraces two cooperative phases: first, original investigation and experimentation for the purpose of discovering and proving new truths, and, second, a series of publications and a system of local professional institutes, by means of which certain available aspects of latest knowledge are communicated directly to the people." Immediately after this quotation Wedemeyer writes: "Chamberlin had outlined what later would be called 'the Wisconsin Idea," and in his concept of 'two cooperative phases' had shadowed forth the concept of a university extension as one of those phases." (p.71)

2. Weaver, John C., "The Revitalizing of The Wisconsin Idea: Statement to Board of Regents," February 11, 1972, mimeographed, Van Hise Hall, Madison, Wisconsin. 4 pages. The complete sentence is "Yet for many of the people of this state -- indeed, of the nation and the world, it is the 'Wisconsin Idea' -- the public service commitment we have long held -- that gives us our most clearly unique identity." (p.1) Weaver concludes his statement with: "The 'Wisconsin Idea,' revitalized in zeal and vision, can do much to rekindle the faith of Wisconsin in its massive investment in higher learning." (p.4)

3. Hurwitz, Howard L., An Encyclopedic Dictionary of American History. New York, Washington Square Press, Simon and Schuster, revised and updated edition, 1974. "During the 20th century, Robert M. La Follette, governor (1901-05) and senator (1905-25), advanced progressive reforms (called the Wisconsin Idea)." (p.718) Morris, Richard B., Editor, Encyclopedia of American History: Enlarged and Updated. New York: Harper and Row, 1970. "Reform movement in the states attacked the alliance between organized wealth and machine politics. An outstanding example was the 'Wisconsin Idea,' a term applied to the legislative and administrative advances (including an income tax and a railroad commission) adopted in Wisconsin during the governorship of Robert M. La Follette," (p.267) "(La Follette) took office as governor (1901) with a program that soon became known as the 'Wisconsin Idea' and served as a model of progressive government: opposition to political bosses, direct appeal to the people, and the employment of technical experts; and specific proposals for direct primary legislation, railroad control, and tax reform." (p.739)

4. Carstensen, Vernon, "The Origin and Early Development of the Wisconsin Idea," Wisconsin Magazine of History, (Spring, 1956), pp. 181-188.

5. Stockbridge, E.P., "A University that Runs a State," World's Work, (April, 1913), pp. 699-708.

6. Curti, Merle and Vernon Carstensen, The University of Wisconsin: A History, 1848-1925. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1949. (p.588) See also pp. 180, 558-559, 588-594. These references are to Volume II. In Volume I see also p. 731.

7. Wisconsin State Journal, (Dec. 12, 1908), pp. 1-2. Reports on a hearing of the Country Life Commission appointed by President Theodore Roosevelt which took place in Madison: "President Van Hise spoke in advocacy of shorter hours of labor on the farm. Eight hours is enough, he said, as in city work. He commended the community idea of building farm homes." (p.2)

8. Hofstadter, Richard, The Age of Reform: From Bryan to F.D.R. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1955. (pp. 177-184)

9. Hofstadter, (p. 267). It might also be worthwhile to, among other things, look into the relationship between La Follette, Van Hise, and Charles McCarthy, with the Legislative Reference Library from 1901 to 1921. McCarthy is credited by some as the main force behind the "revitalization of the University Extension Division." He is quoted as writing: "The University extension was designated for the poor people, those who do not have the opportunity to go to school. I believe the emphasis should be thrown on to the working people and on the poorer people." He opposed Van Hise's proposal to appoint a scholar as head of the extension division. He may have been shunted aside in his attempts to influence the early direction of extension and may have ended up on different sides from Van Hise and La Follette in the "serious split within the ranks of the Wisconsin Progesssives" that took place in 1912. See Carstensen, and Curti and Carstensen above. Also: Woerdehoff, Frank J., "Dr. Charles McCarthy's Role in Revitalizing the University Extension Divison," Wisconsin Magazine of History, (Autumn, 1956), pp. 13-18.

IV. The Land Grant University and Public Service

Land grant institutions affirm a three fold purpose: teaching, research and service. This has been an historic division and is reflected today in the intent that each faculty member at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, includes in his or her work week, as part of job responsibilities some form of "service." Several questions might be helpfully raised about the nature of the commitment to service.

First, historically, questions can be raised about the full commitment to the service part of this trinity. Is the service function real or valid in itself, or is (has it been) marginal to on-campus degree programs and research?(1) A survey of the late nineteenth century history of the University of Wisconsin suggests something less than complete enthusiasm for the service component.

Following the passage of the Morrill Act in 1862, the University of Wisconsin faculty, committed to classical education styles, were not interested in securing the land grant offered by the federal government. It was the Regent's recognition that the university needed the increased support from the land grant income to survive which led them to lobby for it. Only after proposals for attaching the agriculture school to the denominational college at Ripon and establishing a separate agricultural and engineering college failed and time to accept the land grant were running out did the legislature vote the land grant to the University of Wisconsin.(2) Later in 1880 the University of Wisconsin's commitment to practical agriculture was so minimal that there were additional moves, supported by William A. Henry the UW Professor of Agriculture, to establish a separate agricultural institution. The Regents again responded because of their concern for the impact the loss of the land grant would have on the development of the university and ordered Henry to cease agitating for a separate institution, and to develop the agricultural short course without classical standards and admission requirements.(3)

If it is accurate that"public service can function as a legitimating principle for extension only insofar as it is...an end in itself"(4) then the foundation of both the school of agriculture and practical short course training were not ends in themselves but means of securing and maintaining the land grant income, and providing for the survival and enhancement of the University of Wisconsin.

A second concern about public service is the question of who defines both the "public" and the "service" performed. The public is usually the economically significant and politically powerful. The "Wisconsin Idea", described in greater detail elsewhere, came about in relation to the service of a particular political ideology and group. It remains no secret, except to the writers of the public relations materials, that Extension has been largely unsuccessful with people who are marginal economically, with the unemployed, with minorities and marginal and small farmers.(5)

The service function of the Land Grant University is subject to public definitions of what "service" is sufficiently needful to be funded and thus the university has been captive to where money is available, whether Peace Corps training, OEO, Crime in the Streets funding, and so on. UW's President Harrington worked for the merger of cooperative and general extension because of his conviction

that it would enable securing additional federal "service" monies(6). Consistently, however, the funds for programs with prople who lacked resources to pay their way, and the rural development monies were disappointing or non-existent.

A third concern is actually a development of the first. Does the public service function of the Land Grant University serve as public relations dimension, evoking positive public support and defusing criticism so that the university may maintain its elitism in its academic program.(7)

Footnotes: The Land Grant University and Public Service

1. Penfield, Kathleen R., "Public Service Vs. Academic Values: University Extension in Conflict" Adult Education, vol. XXV. No. 2, 1975, pp. 108-9. For full historical development of this thesis see Penfield, Kathleen Rockhill, "Academic Excellence Vs. Public Service: Conflict and Accommodation in the Development of University Extension at the University of California," Dissertation for Doctor of Philosophy Degree in Education at the University of California, Berkeley, 1972.

2. Carlson, Robert A., "Merger In Extension: A History and Analysis of Merger at the University of Wisconsin," Master of Arts (History) thesis at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1968, pp. 19-21.

3. Carlson, pp. 27,29

4. Penfield, Adult Education, p. 109

5. Shannon, Theodore J., and Schoenfield, Clarence A., University Extension, New York, The Center for Applied Research in Education, Inc., 1965, p. 98; Buxton Edward B., "Forum" Journal of Extension, November/December 1975, p. 26; Hightower, Jim, Hard Tomatoes, Hard Times, A Report of the Agribusiness Accountability Project on the failure of America's Land Grant College Complex, Cambridge, Schenkman, 1973, p. 64.

6. Carlson, Robert A., "Merger In Extension" p. 86

7. Penfield, Kathleen R., "Public Service vs. Academic Values", Adult Education, p. 115.

V. Views of Knowledge

However unclear what the Wisconsin Idea was, it is fairly clear even from a cursory examination of the literature what it was not, what views of the nature and ethos of knowledge it did not embody. Nowhere in the Wisconsin Idea, or in the establishment of University or Cooperative Extension, is the belief that learning can come from "others," from "common people," certainly not from other than experts. Nowhere is there the concept of mutual learning, of knowledge as an activity or as experience. Nowhere is there the view that the traditions or backgrounds of the minority groups that make up a significant portion of the state's population (immigrant groups, Native Americans, dissidents, etc.) have anything much to contribute in the way of knowledge.

From the earliest days of University Extension, nurtured in the Progressive movement of La Follette and others, up to the present day it appears that the view of knowledge which prevails is essentially one of scientific-technical expertise flowing from the University to the (ignorant?) population of the state.

Late in 1905 President Van Hise remarked that "a state university should not be above meeting the needs of the people, however elementary the instruction necessary to accomplish this" (our italics).(1) In 1915 Louis E. Reber, the first head of University Extension, a former dean of the college of Engineering at Pennsylvania State College, told the First National University Extension Conference: "University Extension in Wisconsin endeavors to interpret the phraseology of the expert and offers the benefits of research to the household and the workshop, as well as to the municipalities and state."(2) And at the same conference Van Hise said that until the middle of the 19th century knowledge had accumulated rather slowly. After that time advancement of knowledge had been "greater than in a thousand and probably five thousand years before. The result is that the accumulation of knowledge has far outrun the assimilation of the people." Thus it became the duty of the University to "carry to the people the knowledge which they can assimilate for their betterment along all lines."(3)

This point of view still prevails. It is echoed in the remarks of Lorentz H. Adolfson, then Director of Extension, on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of Extension,(4) in the statement of President Weaver in 1972 to the Board of Regents,(5) and with only slight modification in a 1975 insiders view of Extension,(6)

Coupled with this scientific view of the nature of knowledge is a view of the ethos of knowledge as a virtue, a duty, a path to earthly salvation, a justification for a kind of moral crusade.

Curti and Carstensen claim that this view by John Vincent, one of the founders of Chautaugua, along with other similar movements, "provided both the stimulus and the justification for attempting to extend the work of the University into other lines."(7) Vincent wrote in 1886: "The utter neglect of intellectual capacity is criminal, whether it be by menial or millionaire. It involves a wrong to self, to the family, to the state: to self since it leaves him blind whom God created to enjoy the light; to the family since it turns him into a physical and commercial machine whom God appointed to be a companion and comforter; to the state, since it makes him a mere figure head whether of clay or gold - whom God intended to be

a counsellor and helper, and to 'have dominion' according to the measure of his power. No man has a right to neglect his personal education, whether he be prince or ploughboy, broker or hod-carrier."(8)

Curti and Carstensen conclude that among the ideas that controlled the development of the Extension Division in the early 1900's was one that it "aimed at being all things to all men, (was) evangelical in outlook, (and was) unreservedly committed to the assumption that one sure way to earthly salvation lay through education."(9) Carstensen sees this ethos as part of the reform movement in Wisconsin for whom "the first step consisted in spreading information among the people. For them, as for many others, knowledge and virtue were indivisable. Given knowledge, the people would be virtuous and just."(10)

This view of knowledge as virtue apparently still prevails also. In the foreward to a recent book on Extension by two University of Wisconsin executives H.R. Neville, Provost of Michigan State University quotes Plato that "education make(s) good men," states that "through education we can...eradicate society's enemies," and that "A belief in man's perfectability is basic to our ideal of university education and extension service."(11)

Today many people are beginning to question the infallability of scientific-technical knowledge especially when it is coupled with this kind of religious faith in the virtue of its application to all problems and all people. If Paulo Freire is correct that education is never neutral and that its results are either domesticating or liberating, then the Center for Community Leadership Development might want to discuss its own views of knowledge which it applies when working with various groups of people.(12) Also it might want to consider other than the prevailing views of knowledge and look at approaches that take different views.(13)

Footnotes: Views of Knowledge

1. Van Hise, Charles R., "Address to the Association of State Universities," Washington, D.C., November 1905. Quoted in Carstensen, p. 186 (See Section III above.)

2. Reber, Louis E., "The Scope of University Extension and its Organization and Subdivision," Proceedings of the First National University Extension Conference. March 10-12, 1915, p. 25. Quoted in Carstensen, p. 186.

3. Van Hise, Charles R., "The University Extension Function in the Modern University," Proceedings of the First National University Extension Conference. March 10-12, 1915, pp. 8ff. Quoted in Curti and Carstensen, II p. 550 where this interesting statement about differing concepts of "service" appears: "Although Van Hise looked upon research aimed at adding to the store of knowledge as the basic obligation of the University and its fundamental service to the state, he and others began to speak of the threefold function of the University: research, resident instruction and various activities intended to carry knowledge to the people. This last function, in many minds, was the principal 'service' which the University performed. This slight misconception was perhaps warrentable, particularly during Van Hise's administration."

4. Adolfson, Lorentz H., "A Half-Century of University Extension," Wisconsin Magazine of History, (Winter 1956-1957), pp. 99-100. "The underlying ideas which this new university (extension) espoused were: first, that knowledge tends to outrun the ability of the people to assimilate it. Hence adults must continue their education throughout life. Second, that if knowledge must be carried out to the people, the university is an ideal instrument of the state for accomplishing such public service."

5. Weaver. This statement is filled with this point of view as seen especially in pages 2-4 and in the constant repetition of the term "expert" plus "specialist" and "technology transfer function."

6. Wedemeyer, e.g. p. 69: "the major dimensions of Extension can be seen: applying the knowledge of University specialists in the solution of group, community, and individual problems across the state, rural and urban; collaborating and cooperating with other agencies and individuals; and providing and developing leadership in problem-solving approaches for the improvement of the quality of life in Wisconsin."

7. Curti and Carstensen, I, p. 718-719.

8. Curti and Carstensen, I, p. 718

9. Curti and Carstensen, II, p. 567-568.

10. Carstensen, p. 187.

11. Shannon, Theodore J. and Clarence A. Schoenfeld. University Extension. New York: The Center for Applied Research in Education, Inc., 1965. p.v. When this book was written Shannon was Dean of University of Wisconsin-Extension and Schoenfeld was Associate Director of Summer Sessions, University of Wisconsin-Madison and assistant to the Chancellor, University of Wisconsin Center System. See also Hofstadter, p. 15; "The most prominent and pervasive failing (of American political culture in general) is a certain proneness to fits of moral crusading that would be fatal if it were not sooner or later tempered with a measure of apathy and common sense."

12. Friere, Paulo., Pedagogy of the Oppressed. New York: Herder and Herder, 1970.

13. See for instance Friere, and Adams, Frank., Unearthing Seeds of Fire: The Idea of Highlander. Winston-Salem, N.C.: John F. Blair, Publisher, 1975, and Gorz, Andre. "The Hidden Curriculum of Adult Education," Paper prepared at Cuernavaca conference on the pitfalls of deschooling, August 1974, 9 pages, and Illich, Ivan. Tools for Conviviality. New York: Harper and Row, 1973, and Lindeman, Eduard C., The Meaning of Adult Education. Montreal: Harvest House, 1961.